



Department of Justice

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INTERNET SEX STING RESULTS IN GUILTY PLEA

(Sioux City, IA) United States Attorney Matt M. Dummermuth announced today that an Iowa man who used the Internet trying to set up sex with a 14-year-old girl pled guilty to a felony on April 19, 2007, in federal court in Sioux City, Iowa.

JOHN MARK TOWNSEND, 24, from Ottumwa, Iowa, pled guilty to one count of Attempted Coercion and Enticement of a Minor.

At the plea hearing, **TOWNSEND** admitted that, on several occasions in late 2006, he used a computer and the Internet to contact a person he believed to be a 14-year-old girl living in Evansdale, Iowa, and attempted to arrange for her to have sex with him and other adult males. **TOWNSEND** had actually contacted an undercover Deputy Sheriff with the Black Hawk County Sheriff's Office.

Sentencing before United States District Court Judge Mark W. Bennett has been set for 3:00 p.m. on July 17, 2007, in Sioux City. **TOWNSEND** remains in custody of the United States Marshal pending sentencing. **TOWNSEND** faces a possible sentence of at least 10 years' and up to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole, up to a \$250,000 fine, a \$100 special assessment, and supervised release of at least 5 years and up to the remainder of his life following any imprisonment.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Ian K. Thornhill and was investigated by the Black Hawk County Sheriff's Office and the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force. This case was filed as part of Project Safe Childhood. In February 2006, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. Led by the United States Attorneys' Offices, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state, and local resources to better locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet and to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafchildhood.gov.